

Invasive Species

I got an interesting letter the other day on my computer that I thought I would share with this group of beekeepers. The letter had a lot to do with pests and invading species and the impact that it has on our ecosystem. When we think of an invasive species I would guess that we could site examples of things that man has done in bringing different species to areas of the world that negatively impact the plants and animals. Let me list a few that folks should recognize:

The rabbits of Australia, (followed by the Dingo dog to get rid of the rabbits)
The Norway Rat that came with the ships to the Aleutians that wiped out many of the birds there.

The Mongoose that has come to the Hawaiian Islands, to get rid of the rats (but eats the birds instead).

The Zebra Mussel that has come to the east coast of the United States.

As a group of beekeepers I doubt that anyone will overlook the release of the African bee into the tropics of South America. In fact the list is pretty long and covers the tumbleweed, the Yellow jacket, and a whole bunch of other pests.

Most all beekeepers are aware that the honeybee came over from the old world with the European colonization of the Americas. Lighting candles in the church was pretty important to them, and from what I understand it was the primary reason for putting up with a hive of bees on a small ship across the Atlantic. By definition, the arrival of the honeybee is one of the first of the new species to come to the Americas in a long history of invaders. Man has a habit of spreading his influence around wherever he goes. If there are no apple trees we just plant some... Beekeepers are the same way. If there are no bees up here in Alaska then we will just get some from California. I got bees for the pollination of the plants to help our area recover from the Big Lake fire that cooked thousands of acres here. I don't know for sure that it helped but I suspect that it did in my local area (read this as justifiable noble cause inserted here).

Since that time I have changed from a passive plant watcher to an avid plant watcher. Has anyone else besides me noticed the increase in Purple Vetch along the roadsides in the summer? The stuff is everywhere out there in the Matanuska Susitna valley. I know that this plant was never here before but now it is even in my yard. In fact I never saw this plant until a few years ago. I have no idea where it came from or if it gives good nectar. I pull it up when I find it but it seems as bad as chickweed to get rid of. The letter

that I got concerned clover. As we all know, clover is a favorite plant of beekeepers because it produces lots of nectar. Personally it is one of the plants that I am at war with because I think that it produces a very poor taste in the honey. But that is another issue entirely. This letter that follows shows another side of clover that most beekeepers don't think about. I reproduce it here because I have seen and heard beekeepers ask the question "What kind of plants should I plant to help the bees that I have produce more honey?" The following article is something that we should consider in our planting. *Steve Victors*